

To the Members of the California State Senate:

I am returning Senate Bill 1197 without my signature.

The Medi-Cal program exists to insure that needy persons have access to basic medical care without requiring them to sell their homes or take steps that would unnecessarily bring disorder or harm to their lives. Current law already allows the Department of Health Services to waive claims against an estate if a hardship would be created for dependents or heirs as a result of the claim. Therefore, adequate financial protections already exist for the family or heir of a Medi-Cal beneficiary. Where no hardship would be created, the taxpayers are entitled to reimbursement for the care rendered to a Medi-Cal beneficiary whose estate contains assets sufficient to pay it. Limiting the timeframe in which benefits can be collected only serves to decrease the State's ability to provide services to future beneficiaries.

For these reasons, I am unable to sign this bill.

Sincerely,

Arnold Schwarzenegger